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BPA moves to aid fish affected by emergency power operations

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration announced today that it will fund approximately \$10 million worth of projects aimed at helping fish affected by this year's power emergency operations. This is in addition to nearly \$19 million in "high priority" projects that BPA announced in May to help jumpstart fish recovery efforts. The agency also left the door open for additional funding pending further review of other projects. *(See attached list of projects to be funded.)*

"This has been a terrible year both for fish and power, and it has been a difficult balancing act to ensure a reliable electricity supply and minimize harm to endangered salmon and steelhead," Steve Wright, BPA's acting administrator said. "These projects will help offset the impact to fish of actions we have had to take to preserve regional reliability."

In May, BPA called for proposals that could be put in place quickly to help those specific fish runs affected by the emergency power operations. Since the projects are to be funded by BPA ratepayers, the actions were limited to addressing the effects of power operations and not the overall drought. BPA called for actions in four categories: 1) actions to increase tributary flows; 2) tributary habitat passage improvements; 3) tributary diversion screening; and 4) fish stock relocation and outplanting.

Because of extreme low water and western U.S. energy supply problems, the federal agencies have been forced to suspend spill operations for endangered fish this

spring and summer in order to meet the region's energy needs. Some water that would have been passed through spillways to help juvenile fish traverse the dams was instead run through turbines to generate electricity.

There was a limited spill program in the spring--when the bulk of endangered fish travel downstream--but no spill thus far this summer as concern continues about maintaining a reliable power system. The projects were selected because their benefits were directed at those endangered fish that suffered most from diminished spill programs.

"With survival levels already down due to low flows, we felt it was important to seek out ways to at least partially make up for the additional losses caused by reduced spill," said Brian Brown, hydro director for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

In all, 50 projects were submitted. Each was reviewed internally by BPA and by the Independent Scientific Review Panel for biological effectiveness and evaluated against criteria to ensure the project met the primary focus of immediate help and was consistent with applicable laws, treaties and trust agreements. The Northwest Power Planning Council also reviewed the proposals and recommended 21 proposals for BPA funding.

Of these, BPA has agreed to fund 17 proposals for a total of \$9.6 million. Acceptance of some of the proposals is pending completion of additional review by the Independent Scientific Review Panel. BPA also said it would consider future funding of the Council's remaining recommendations although it recognizes that time is limited for initiating more projects this year. Some of these proposals were for land acquisition, which was outside of BPA's solicitation criteria.

The Council has an ongoing Provincial Review Process that groups subbasins into geographic areas called provinces. "We felt the land acquisition proposals should be reviewed as part of this provincial process since it will better describe the context for such acquisitions," said Bob Austin, BPA's deputy fish and wildlife manager. Further justification of needs and priorities for these types of acquisitions will occur later this year as development of Subbasin Assessments are revised and Subbasin Plans get underway throughout the region.

While the selected projects focus on short-term actions that can be taken this year, it's expected that some of the benefits will continue in the long term and may also help non-endangered species.

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See attached list of selected projects

Projects selected to address impacts of emergency power operations

(Includes target fish and project cost)

Trout Creek streamflow enhancement sponsored by Oregon Water Trust, Deschutes Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead. \$133,500.

Streamflow enhancement project sponsored by Oregon Water Trust, John Day Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead. \$73,340.

Supplemental flows in Buck Hollow Creek sponsored by Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District, Deschutes Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead. \$22,826.

Streamflow and fish passage improvements for Sincoe Creek steelhead sponsored by Yakama Nation, Yakima Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead. \$767,143.

Trout Creek culvert replacement sponsored by U.S. Forest Service, Deschutes Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead. \$128,000 (cost share with USFS).

Badger Creek culvert replacement and road closure projects sponsored by U.S. Forest Service, Deschutes Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead. \$87,000 (cost share with USFS).

Hancock springs passage and habitat restoration improvements sponsored by Yakama Nation, Methow Subbasin. Upper Columbia River spring chinook and steelhead. \$49,941.

Lower Lemhi/Salmon rivers passage restoration sponsored by Idaho Office of Species Conservation, Salmon Subbasin. Snake River spring/summer chinook and steelhead. \$380,000.

Touchet River flow acquisition sponsored by Washington Water Trust, Walla Walla Subbasin. Middle Columbia River steelhead, bull trout. \$115,524.

Acquiring Lostine River water rights sponsored by Nez Perce Tribe, Grande Ronde Subbasin. Snake River spring/summer chinook and steelhead, bull trout. \$150,000.

Methow Basin screening sponsored by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Methow Subbasin. Upper Columbia River steelhead and spring chinook, bull trout. \$250,000.

Lake Roosevelt/Colville Tribes emergency fish restoration sponsored by Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation, Lake Roosevelt. Unlisted resident fish. \$262,240.

Location, marking and removal of lost "ghost" fishing nets in selected Columbia River reservoirs (feasibility study) sponsored by Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Columbia Gorge. Seven evolutionarily significant units identified. \$86,109.

Increase of Naches River instream flows by purchasing Wapatox water right sponsored by Yakama Nation, Yakima Subbasin (pending resolution of policy concerns). Middle Columbia River steelhead, bull trout. \$4,000,000.

Transfer of Lemhi water users to Salmon River sponsored by Idaho Office of Species Conservation in the Salmon Subbasin (pending independent scientific review). Snake River spring/summer chinook and steelhead, bull trout. \$2,860,000.

Outplanting of adult spring/summer chinook and steelhead sponsored by Nez Perce Tribe, Mountain Snake Subbasin (pending independent scientific review). \$195,267.

Monitoring and evaluation of outplanting of spring/summer chinook and steelhead sponsored by S.P. Cramer & Associates in the Mountain Snake Subbasin (pending independent scientific review). \$75,200.

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